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ABSTRACT

This monograph, part of a series for language arts teachers, discusses the essential components for teaching modern poetry and modern fiction. The section on modern poetry considers traditional versus modern poetry, modernism in poetry, imagism, the function of poetry in modern times, social change in poetry, and offers a brief list of recommended poems. The section concerned with the teaching of modern fiction includes discussions of modernism and modern fiction, the poetics of modern fiction, and how to teach novels. It also offers analyses of specific works, and brief discussions of other recommended works of fiction. A selected bibliography on theories, modernism, modern poetry, and modern fiction and a list of professional organizations are attached. (RL)

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TEACHING MODERN LITERATURE: POETRY AND FICTION

Richard Damashek

Language Arts Monograph
State Board of Education
Illinois Office of Education
Joseph M. Cronin, State Superintendent of Education

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FOREWORD

In October, 1974, twenty Illinois language arts professors, teachers and Illinois Office of Education consultants met in Urbana to discuss and to respond to the need for materials especially written for classroom teachers of language arts. The Urbana meeting focused upon a plan to print a number of monographs, each one emphasizing language arts and each one fitting into a series of monographs suggesting the depth of language arts education.

Following the Urbana meeting, monograph authors and editors collected, organized and explained ideas from nearly 50 Illinois contributors. Monograph titles, chapter titles, and section headings covering hundreds of currently employed language arts ideas and practices took shape.

The intent of all the monographs was to combine theory and practice into brief suggestions for classroom teachers of language arts. Although some of the suggestions are new to the profession, most reflect the best teaching practices by experienced Illinois teachers. Some monographs take controversial stances on issues, but even the controversial points of view are clearly within the realms of accepted pedagogy. As planned, all nine monographs report effective, often-used teaching practices.

Monograph authors and editors wrote from their own philosophies, and they wrote about the ways of teaching they knew best; no attempt was made to advance the cause of any particular educational practice or terminology. The monographs respond both to persistent issues as well as to modern trends in language arts education.

More than 50 teachers of language arts gave of their inspiration, time, and patience. Illinois students will profit from such professional efforts given for the good of education in Illinois.

A special thanks should be given to two Illinois Office of Education staff members — Mina Halliday and Alan Lemke. They conceived the idea for the monograph project, guided it to its completion, and made contributions to several monographs. The development of these monographs was a monumental effort to improve education in Illinois and the success of the project can be attributed to Ms. Halliday and Dr. Lemke.

Joseph M. Cronin

Joseph M. Cronin
State Superintendent of Education

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PREFACE

A few words of explanation about the method of this monograph may be helpful. First of all, I have included poetry and fiction only, and not drama because it is a subject by itself and ought to be reserved for another monograph. Furthermore, you will discover that the fiction section is significantly larger than the poetry section. The reason for this difference is the necessity of describing fictional works with which you may not have time to become acquainted. It is much easier to read a poem in a short time and know whether you will want to teach it.

Most important, you will discover that my emphasis is different from that of other guides of this kind. As a teacher, I was, and still am, offended by lists of questions, and gimmicks or "methods" provided in teaching manuals. So I have avoided the lists, but not entirely abandoned suggestions. You will find them integrated in my discussions of specific poems and works of fiction. If everything works out, you will be able to order a video cassette to accompany this monograph. On it will be simulated demonstrations of a variety of additional techniques and an audio-visual introduction to modernism as a literary movement.

At the end of the monograph you will find an extensive bibliography on modernism and on modern poetry and fiction, both for your edification and your advanced students'.

Originally I set out to present a study of the modernist movement in literature as the context for your understanding modern literary works. As I began writing, I realized that such an introduction would be too cumbersome an apparatus for my more immediate purpose: namely, to introduce you to selected works which could and should be taught in the high schools. So I suppressed my urge to be comprehensive and instead have discussed in detail only a few aspects of an extremely complex period of literary history.

Finally, I have been cognizant of the need to present a fair representation of writers who are part of the sub or minority culture of America. This recognition provided me with a significant challenge. Modernism is not a minority cultural movement but rather an "end" product of a long period of evolution of Western Civilization, almost entirely white, Catholic, and Protestant. To some, it represents the decay of that civilization; to others a high point. Also it is an international, not a national movement. Thus we will be considering writers representing a variety of countries. In America this modernist movement has had a great influence on black writers, but, for the most part, those who came after: Wright, Ellison, and Baldwin, among the most notable. Thus reference to black writers will be scanty. If we were writing about post-modernist writers, black writers would be in the vanguard and among the most prominent and influential.

MODERN POETRY

INTRODUCTORY

My premise about the teaching of modern poetry is that it should be exciting, stimulating, passionate, and only slightly intellectual. The teaching-learning relationship should be as open and dynamic as the poetry itself. Conventional rules or formulas are difficult to apply to the poetry as well as to teaching it. (One of the best books on conventional poetics is Paul Fussell's Poetic Meter and Poetic Form, a clear and comprehensive study of what a poem is through the study of a wide variety of poems from all periods of English poetry, including the modern.) You need only allow yourself to be possessed by the sheer energy and excitement embodied in the work of the best poets and your enthusiasm will be contagious. In fact, the poems should not be taught, they should be shared experiences. Here's how it works.

one
t
hi
s
snowflake
(a
  li
    ght
  in
g)
is upon a gra
v
es
t
one

How do you read the poem? The opening word is simple enough, but the next, "this," presents some difficulty. "Snowflake" flattens out and is quite clear, followed by the curving or swerving "alighting" which, as we follow it down, seems to come to rest upon a line of letters planted, or which extends, into the ground – "gravestone." The poem begins and ends with the word "one" – from heaven to earth is all **one.** The poem is circular or presents a closed circle of activity, a cycle of nature, the ubiquitious snow falling on the living and the dead. Even if so much isn't meant in the poem, is this really poetry?

First of all, what happened to all the rules? Where are its stanzas, its regular meters, its rhymes? Here's a most interesting and important lesson that artists in our time learned and taught each other (that many teachers haven't learned): **the form of any work of art is not pre-established or pre-existent, but individual and unique, a function of the particular expressive needs of the content of the work.** No one form is right for any work other than itself. Let's call this concept expressive form: the form expresses the content. The form of this and so many other Cummings poems is meant to graphically and phonetically represent the poem's meaning. The graphic dimension (sometimes called concrete form: the poem **looks** like what it is expressing, as in John Donne's poem "The Alter," shaped to resemble an altar) is meant to focus our attention on one snowflake, and then follow its course as it floats gently to rest on the tombstone. Though not a very profound poem, it is a beautifully simple one, in which sight and sound reinforce the gentle floating movement. Ask yourself, "If I received a similar poem as a response to an assignment to write a poem, how would I respond?"

This photograph of "Abstracted Portrait" by Rudolph Weisenborn is printed through the cooperation of the Illinois State Museum.

In this formal construct, lines and planes become subject; the original face becomes its geometric forms. The content of this painting is a particular arrangement of intersecting planes.

This photograph of "Untitled Study of Prognostic" by Manierre Dawson is printed through the cooperation of the Illinois State Museum.

This work relies totally on line and color patterns for its subject. It is its own subject matter. There is no attempt at rendering human beings in action or recognizable objects in nature.

Test yourself on another Cummings poem:

Buffalo Bill's
defunct
who used to
ride a watersmooth-silver
stallion
and break onetwothreefourfivepigeonsjustlikethat
Jesus
he was a handsome man
and what i want to know is
how do you like your blueeyed boy
Mister Death

In some ways, this poem is more unconventional than the preceding. In "one/this" Cummings breaks up syntax and words to draw an image on the page. Here he tends to do the opposite: he jams words together to make new ones (neologisms is the technical term). "onetwothreefourfivepigeonsjustlikethat" – it takes a moment to decipher, but then doesn't it seem so right? You can't miss the accents, and you don't have to guess what to stress: the whole compressed series of nine words, 10 syllables, are made into onemachinegunlikerattle. And what he does for pregnant pauses!

he was a handsome man Jesus
and what I want to know is

You can't miss the irony and the surprise because the words and lines are arranged on the page as if they were notes of a musical score: the lines **are** visually scored.

These poems are typical of the kind of experimentation and innovation that moderns were introducing in their work. Indeed nothing was too risky for them to try, though I wish to emphasize that I can't think of a development in form, technique, or subject that others hadn't used before them, but not to the same degree. Free verse, for example, is hardly a new development in poetry, but not until 19th-century French poets used it extensively did it become a major new form of poetry composition. Another important earlier example of free verse is Walt Whitman's **Leaves of Grass:**

> The spotted hawk swoops by and accuses me, he complains of my gab and my loitering.
> I too am not a bit tamed, I too am untranslatable,
> I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world.

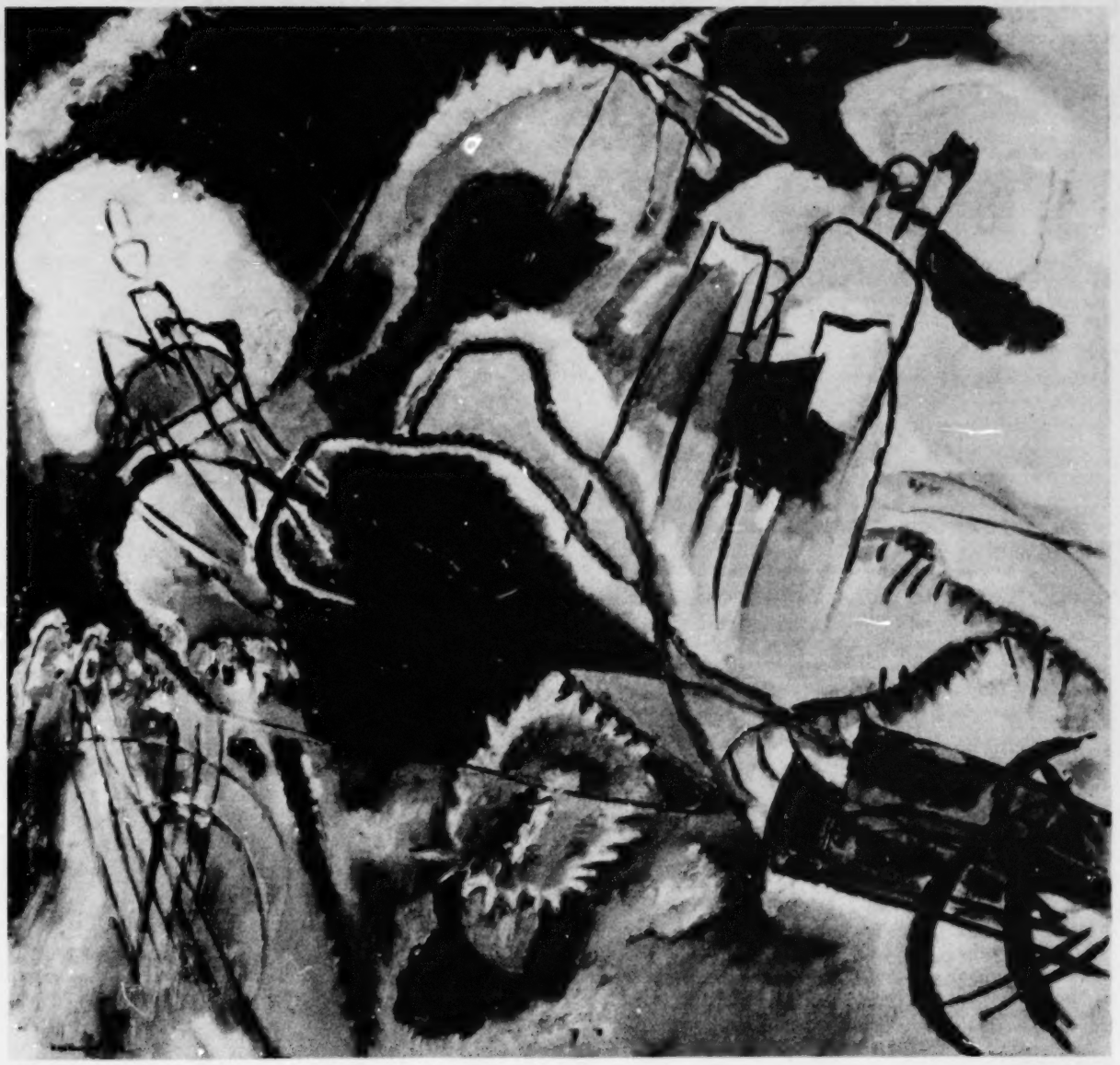
You can't get much freer than that!

It is just this sense of rebellion, dissatisfaction, and revolution that will appeal to high school seniors. And if you can get them to carry out their rebellion in poetic forms you will have accomplished the miracle of the century.

TRADITIONAL VS. MODERN

In order to understand more fully this revolution in poetry, it is necessary to see what the moderns were rejecting.

More than 100 years before the moderns, English poetry had experienced a powerful revolution, a tremendous infusion of energy into decaying and stale forms. Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley, and Keats together wrote more forceful poetry in a period of about 30 years, (1790-1820), than had been written in more than 100, since the great 17th-century period of Donne, Herbert, Vaughan, Herrick, and Crashaw. After the tremendous outpouring of poetry in the first part of the 19th century, poets who followed lacked the intensity of their predecessors and instead of carrying forward the revolution, imitated its successes. By the end of the century these imitations had become the same kind of lifeless products that inspired the revolution 100 years before. In England poetry was being produced by poets whom you may not have heard of before because their work was quickly forgotten or reserved primarily for the textbooks of school children: Lionel Johnson, Ernest Dowson, James



Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago

Line and color are also the subject of this totally abstract painting. You may be able to make out lines of tall buildings and a wagon in the foreground, but those distorted forms are subsumed in the line and color scheme.

Thomson, George Meredith, William Henley, Sidney Lanier, Robert Bridges. Of course, there are several notable exceptions, such as A.E. Housman, Thomas Hardy, and Gerard Hopkins (whose work was not discovered until the 1920's, and who published nothing in his lifetime).

Typical of the poetry being written by the now forgotten poets were lines such as these from Johnson's "The Dark Angel:"

Dark Angel, with **thine** aching lust
To rid the world of penitence:
Malicious Angel, who still dost
My soul such subtle violence!

Because of thee, no thought, no thing
Abides for me undesecrate:
Dark Angel, ever on the wing,
Who never reachest me too late!

One of the great achievements of the Romantics had been to liberate the forces of the unconscious and to make the individual self a legitimate subject of poetry. This liberation led to excesses, such as Byron's dismal play **Manfred,** a kind of wallowing in the pain and suffering that lay at the bottom of that treacherous abyss of the self. Johnson's poem picks up that wallowing and formalizes it in rhymes and stanzaic forms, gives it a pattern and shape, which instead of making something moving or inspirational of it, trivializes and, to borrow from the poem itself, "desecrates" it. The rhyming tells all: "lust" rhymes with "dost," "thing" with "wing," "undesecrate" with "late". One of the first principles of effective rhyme is that the rhyming words resonate off each other, that they make for a richer context of meaning. These rhymes do not have that effect. We might note also that half the words themselves are either archaic forms ("dost"), meaningless abstractions ("thing"), or unpoetic and harsh sounding ("undesecrate").

Of course this problem with language extends beyond the rhyming words to the context of the poem itself. The first two stanzas, like the rest of the poem, are loaded with pseudo-poetic language: "thine" and "thee" and "reachest," the most glaring examples. Worse still, is the total abstractness of the imagery: what is this "Dark Angel" we cannot see? The poet tells us about his soul and the malicious influence this angel has on him, but what is the influence? In stanza three we hear about "gracious Muses" who turn "to Furies" and then about "tormented slumber" which becomes "One vehemence of useless tears."

Structurally, the poem consists of 14 four-line stanzas in iambic tetrameter. Ask yourself whether there is any reason why this form best expresses the content of the poem? Would another form do as well, better perhaps? The other 12 stanzas continue developing the thesis that the poet is tormented by lust, but in the last stanza he asserts quite boldly:

> Do what thou wilt, thou shalt not so,
> Dark Angel! triumph over me:
> **Lonely, unto the Lone I go;**
> **Divine, to the Divinity.**

The ending is trite, but characteristic of mediocre poetry in which the poet may attempt to deal with significant problems but must have a happy resolution with which to soothe his readers. "Lonely," "Lone," "Divine," "Divinity" – such repetition fills up space but contributes nothing to the sincerity of the utterance.

Poems of this kind are legion not only in this end of the 19th-century period, but in all periods, including our own. I want to emphasize that we could examine other samples and draw similar conclusions. But this one should be enough to provide a basis for understanding what the moderns felt they were inheriting and their need to start fresh, to "make it new," as William Carlos Williams declared. How to get away from the phony language, the abstractness, the conventional forms, the meaningless rhymes—in other words how to revitalize the art of poetry, to restore it once more to a live, passionate, energetic, and visionary art that could express and explore the problems of modern life, in the way poetry had always done in its greatest moments. These were the concerns of Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, Rainer Maria Rilke, W.B. Yeats, and a host of lesser poets.

MODERNISM IN POETRY

The process of restoration involved, first of all, the determination to make the image primarily responsible for carrying the weight of the poem's meaning. The reasoning for this conclusion is based on the conviction that reality is the things we talk about, not the talk itself. Thus if you want to communicate with your reader something about a particular cloud, or swan, or daffodil, or person, the way to do it is by rendering that particular object as fully as possible without subjective intrusion: "No ideas but in things."

As Pound put it: "It is better to present one Image in a lifetime than to produce voluminous works." An image meant to Pound "that which presents an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time. It is the presentation of such a 'complex' instantaneously which gives the sense of sudden liberation; that sense of freedom from time limits and space limits; that sense of sudden growth, which we experience in the presence of the greatest works of art. . .". T.S. Eliot's notion of the objective correlative is similar. He describes it as "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events which shall be the formula of that **particular** emotion," by which he too means the embodiment of feeling or emotion or thought in images. "No ideas but in things" meant to Williams that a poet should not try to say what he means in a particular poem, but should let the images of the poem say it for him.

Such as in his poem, "Dawn:"

> Ecstatic bird songs pound
> the hollow vastness of the sky
> with metallic clinkings–
> beating color up into it
> at a far edge,–beating it, beating it
> with rising, triumphant ardor,–
> stirring it into warmth,
> quickening in it a spreading change,–
> bursting wildly against it as
> dividing the horizon, a heavy sun
> lifts himself–is lifted–
> bit by bit above the edge
> of things,–runs free at last
> out into the open–! lumbering
> glorified in full release upward–
> songs cease.

Image upon cascading image, rising in a crescendo of emotion, or complex of thought and emotion, as Pound would say, bird song pounding color into the hollow vastness of the sky (whatever does he mean by "metallic clinkings"?) preparing for the slow uplifting of the sun, songs ending in the light. What does the poem mean? Archibald MacLeish

would say reprovingly, "A poem should not mean/But be." ("Ars Poetica") Try it out on your students. Does it mean more than it says? What does it say? Is it necessary or helpful to read into it a social, political, or personal context? You decide.

Another poem, too long to quote in its entirety, that might serve as an example of this emphasis on the image carrying or conveying the entire meaning of the poem is Eliot's "Preludes." The poem's title is ironic: it refers to a musical composition, in this case in four parts, that prepares for the main subject or theme, but here preparatory of nothing. Each section represents a bit of city life in a state of suspended animation, or lifelessness that appears to be unalterable. Stanza one:

The winter evening settles down
With smell of steaks in passageways.
Six o'clock.
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.
And now a gusty shower wraps
The grimy scraps
Of withered leaves about your feet
And newspapers from vacant lots;
The showers beat
On broken blinds and chimney-pots,
And at the corner of the street
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps.

And then the lighting of the lamps.

What a scene! Could it be grimier, more desolate, more ugly urban? The entire stanza is built out of sense images that in the totality of their impact on our senses are bound to make us **feel,** not think, the physically revolting scene. Through what sense doors do you find Eliot trying to force his scene in upon us? First and most obvious is smell: the greasy smell of steaks in alleys, the exhaust fumes of cheap restaurants. Next or simultaneously we sense, can almost reach out and touch in our minds, the feel of a winter evening and perhaps can even smell and taste the smoky air: a mingling of exhaust from furnaces in homes, factories and offices, cars, kitchens, and cigarette and cigar smoke. We feel the damp and the "grimy scraps/Of withered leaves" and newspapers wrap around our feet blown by the gusty shower, and hear and see the water beating on "broken blinds and chimney-pots." For a moment we become the "lonely cab-horse" steaming and stamping to ward off the cold and damp. Then all is lit in "the lighting of the lamps." The whole scene comes into focus, is illuminated, or fully apprehended by us. The image of the lighting of the lamps synthesizes the scene, makes the disparate, but related, images one.

Eliot employs the same imagistic technique in "Rhapsody on a Windy Night," a poem similar to "Preludes" in Eliot's ironic use of musical structure. In fact the poem begins as if it were another attempt to get at the same condition: the time is now midnight.

Twelve o'clock
Along the reaches of the street
Held in a lunar synthesis,
Whispering lunar incantations
Dissolve the floors of memory
And all its clear relations,
Its divisions and precisions.
Every street lamp that I pass
Beats like a fatalistic drum,
And through the spaces of the dark
Midnight shakes the memory
As a madman shakes a dead geranium.

If we compare the opening stanzas of both poems we can discover some interesting differences: the most important difference is that this first stanza contains a speaker who describes not only the world without, but the way in which it affects him. Clearly that effect destroys his sense of separateness from the world, which now in the "lunar synthesis" interpenetrates it. The result is that person and environment become one. In "Preludes" the speaker stands outside the objects and events he describes; here he is part of them. Another way of describing the situation is to say that in "Preludes" the speaker is an objective observer describing someone else's nightmare; but in "Rhapsody" he is in his own. The imagery of "Preludes" creates for us a world we can experience through our senses, as does the speaker describing it, but the imagery of "Rhapsody" creates for us a world in which objective and subjective worlds merge, a world of dream, in which we are never certain whether the speaker is imagining something, or projecting onto the environment his own fears and anxieties. For example, in stanza two, the street lamp "sputters, mutters," and speaks to him, and then again in each of the succeeding stanzas.

Probably the chief difficulty in talking about Eliot's use of imagery in this poem is that his images become symbols for contents of the speaker's unconscious. The images are loaded with meaning and significance beyond themselves. Perhaps a meaningful comparison would be to Williams' short poem, "Dawn," where it is possible to argue that the images represent only themselves, not the unconscious of the speaker. Indeed there is no speaker: the necessary fiction of the poem is that it is a piece of pure scene painting: it is itself.

Of course, one could argue quite convincingly that Williams' scene represents the perspective of the poet and embodies or IS his sense of it, and thus reflects his state of mind. And to that there could be no denial. Nevertheless, we are talking in relative terms. If we cannot say absolutely that an image represents only itself, we can say that there is a fundamental difference **of intent** in a poet's attempt to create such an impression, as Williams does, and the attempt to create a diametrically opposite impression, as does T.S. Eliot in "Preludes" and "Rhapsody on a Windy Night."

This photograph of "Into the World There Came a Soul Named Ida" by Lvon Le Loraine Albright is printed through the cooperation of the Illinois State Museum.

The entire scene expresses the state of Ida's soul or psyche. Even the dressing table takes on the garrish, overstuffed, lumpy contours of Ida's grotesque body.

IMAGISM

This emphasis on the importance of imagery developed into a full-fledged literary movement, called appropriately **Imagism.** It had as its major idealogue a writer-critic named T.E. Hulme; its p.r. man in Ezra Pound; its business manager in Amy Lowell; and its practitioners H.D. (Hilda Doolittle), D.H. Lawrence, F.S. Flint, John Gould Fletcher, and Carl Sandburg. Although the movement did not last more than a few years (1909-1918), its influence on modern poetry was enormous: the most important poets in England and America, at least for a time, practiced its mandates. Eliot, Pound, Williams, Stevens, and Lawrence all wrote poems during these years in which they tried above all to purify their poems of discourse and render only the image, or group of images.

Imagism is a French import, a term borrowed from contemporary criticism of certain French poets called **des Imagistes.** Another influence came from Chinese poetry and Japanese Haiku, with its emphasis on the single sharp image. Some of the most beautiful poems of our century are the translations and free adaptations Ezra Pound made of Chinese poems, including "The River Song" and "The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter" by Rihaku. In 1917 Amy Lowell described in **Tendencies in Modern American Poetry** what the major objectives of the Imagists were:

1. to use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not the nearly-exact, not the merely decorative word. [This charge was reechoed by both Eliot and Williams, as they strove, as Wordsworth had more than a century earlier, to restore the language of poetry to the "language really used by men" ("Preface" to **Lyrical Ballads,** 1800).]

2. to create new rhythms—as the expression of new moods—and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist upon free verse as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free verse than in conventional forms. In poetry, a new cadence means a new idea.

3. to allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write badly about aeroplanes and automobiles; nor is it necessarily bad art to write well about the past. We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane of the year 1911.

4. to present an image (hence the name: "Imagist"). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real difficulties of his art.

5. to produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite. [W.B. Yeats makes the same statement in "The Fisherman:"

> Maybe a twelvemonth since
> Suddenly I began,
> * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
> Imagining a man,
> And his sun-freckled face,
> And grey Connemara cloth,
> Climbing up to a place
> Where stone is dark under froth,
> * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *
> A man who does not exist,
> A man who is but a dream;
> And cried, "Before I am old
> I shall have written him one
> Poem maybe as cold
> And passionate as the dawn."]

6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry.

Ezra Pound's short poem, "In a Station of the Metro," represents the epitome of these objectives:

> The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
> Petals on a wet, black bough.

Although not a haiku (which would require three lines of five, seven, and five syllables) the poem is obviously an adaptation of the form. The intention is the same: creation of a picture designed to arouse a particular emotion and produce a spiritual insight. Try the poem on your students. See what they can make of it. Have them try imitating the form and then share the poem in class. Do some yourself; you'll appreciate the difficulty and the beauty of the form that much better. Then you might like to try this poem of Yeats, "The Valley of the Black Pig," which begins:

> The dews drop slowly and dreams gather: unknown spears
> Suddenly hurtle before my dream-awakened eyes,
> And then the clash of fallen horsemen and the cries
> Of unknown perishing armies beat about my ears.

Or this one by James Joyce, "I hear an Army," which begins:

> I hear an army charging upon the land,
> And the thunder of horses plunging, foam about their knees:
> Arrogant, in black armor, behind them stand,
> Disdaining the reins, with fluttering whips, the charioteers.

Neither of these last two fragments is written in free verse, nor are they especially modern, but they certainly create the sharp, clear, and hard images Amy Lowell called for. Finally, try "Pied Beauty" by Gerard Manley Hopkins:

Glory be to God for dappled things–
For skies of couple-color as a brinded cow;
For rose-moles all in stipple upon trout that swim;
Fresh-firecoal chestnut-falls, finches' wings;
Landscapes plotted and pieced–fold, fallow, and plow;
And all trades, their gear and tackle and trim.
All things counter, original, spare, strange;
Whatever is fickle, freckled (who knows how?)
With swift, slow; sweet, sour; addazzle, dim;
He fathers-forth whose beauty is past change:
Praise Him.

Imagism has profound implications for the teaching of poetry, not only modern verse but also in the stimulation of young people to write poetry. When you have learned its principles, you will have the potential for a radically new approach to teaching creative writing.

Obviously it is not enough to talk about technique. Of course, your students will love you if you use this talk to encourage them to experiment with expressive form, to let their spirits soar and not be confined by traditional notions of proper form and poetic convention. No good poem follows anyone's rules but the poem's own. When T.S. Eliot began his most famous poem, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," with the lines:

Let us go then you and I
While the evening is spread out against the sky
Like a patient etherised upon a table;

he shocked a whole generation of poetry readers. How could such an improbable metaphor and such a degenerate one as that be considered poetry? The answer, Eliot told them, was to be found in the great poetry of 17th-century England, in the poetry of so-called Metaphysicals: John Donne, William Vaughn, George Herbert, and Thomas Traherne. Their discovery was that the juxtaposition of two totally incompatible metaphors or images (called conceits) could produce a new insight into reality. So you see, the discussion of technique can be an important tool in the liberation of your students from unnecessary restrictions.

THE FUNCTION OF POETRY IN MODERN TIMES

But if technique isn't enough to discuss, what else might you talk about? Perhaps your students won't get too excited about a snowflake falling on a tombstone. But they could get involved in what Cummings might (notice I said "might") mean in "Buffalo Bill's/defunct." One of the surprising and difficult aspects of modern poetry (modern art in general) is that it doesn't tell you what it means. Archibald MacLeish made a credo out of the idea that poems aren't meant to mean anything, they simply are themselves:

A poem should not mean
But be.
("Ars Poetics")

He's not alone in this pronouncement. Many other moderns have made the same claim and tried to separate art from the world of fact and opinion, as if it inhabited a special and sacred world of its own. W.B. Yeats in his "Sailing to Byzantium" spoke of this idea by expressing a wish to be transformed into a golden bird who might sing to keep a tired emperor awake:

Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enameling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

The sense of this poem is very near to what the English Romantic poet, John Keats, meant in his famous poem, "Ode on a Grecian Urn." In contemplating an ancient Grecian urn, Keats comments on the scene painted on it of two lovers held forever in a state of suspended animation. The magic of art has made the love, the lovers, and their beauty immortal. He ends the poem with these difficult and cryptic lines:

O Attic shape! Fair attitude! with brede
Of marble men and maidens overwrought,
With forest branches and the trodden weed;
Thou, silent form, dost tease us out of thought
As doth eternity: Cold Pastoral!
When old age shall this generation waste,
Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"–that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

This early 19th-century (1819) statement about the interrelationship of truth and beauty may be considered one of the most eloquent early statements of the relationship of art to modern life.

Consider for a moment the Grecian urn itself. Keats took his inspiration from the Elgin marbles and the Grecian urns in the British Museum. The marbles are decorative panels on the exterior of the Parthenon in Athens, perhaps the most beautiful temple surviving from the fourth century B.C., the height of Athens' greatness. The building was not only a magnificent work of art and architectural triumph, but it was a place of workshop. The friezes, which Lord Elgin took to England, had in addition to a decorative an educational and inspirational function. Carved in stone were the myths that sustained the consciousness of the period. The urns, which Keats eulogized, were purely utilitarian objects. Yet they, too, expressed an awareness that grace and beauty should be part of the most mundane objects of life.

POETRY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Within this context, we might better understand not only Keats' lament, but Yeats', and so many other modern artists who were convinced that art no longer had a utilitarian func-

tion or an integral relationship to the world. It would be a mistake to think that Yeats thought only of escape into some mystical realm of the poetic imagination. On the contrary, he was one of the most revolutionary poets of our time. He strove in his poetry, plays, essays, and public addresses to raise Ireland's consciousness of its past glories and deep well of mythic understanding. His struggle for the freedom of his people was directed less toward the achievement of political freedom than to liberation of the mind and imagination, through which he knew political liberation would follow. In one of his early poems, "Aedh Tells of the Rose in his Heart," he speaks of the "wrong of unshapely things" and his hunger to remake them in the image of his love, as Dante, through his love of Beatrice, saw the image of perfection of life:

> The wrong of unshapely things is a wrong too great to be told;
> I hunger to build them anew and sit on a green knoll apart,
> With the earth and the sky and the water, remade, like a casket of gold
> For my dreams of your image that blossoms a rose in the deeps of my heart.

Although these lines express the dreamy vision of a young romantic poet, they contain the essence of Yeats' commitment to try to make Ireland great. He devoted himself to public service, including a term of office in the Senate of the newly established Irish Free State in 1922.

One of the most dangerous misconceptions about art in our time is that it has little to do with our everyday political, social, and economic realities. Nothing could be farther from the truth. There is a long tradition of art as integral to the entire religious, social, and political structures of ancient societies. The artist served in Greece, Egypt, Rome and during the great period of the western Renaissance, as the chief force in the education and inspiration of the common people and aristocracy. The Italian poet Dante is a good example of this relationship in reverse. So powerful was his **Divine Comedy** as a source of social criticism, that he was considered a traitor and banished from his native town. On the other hand, **The Divine Comedy** soon became recognized as the greatest devotional Catholic poem in the language, and I've been told it is not uncommon to find a modern-day Italian taxi driver who can recite passages from Dante for your entertainment.

Until recent times, aestheticians have said that the purpose of art is twofold: to please and to instruct. No one has any trouble with the idea that art has as its primary purpose pleasure—a night out at the theatre is so often thought of as a pleasurable interlude. But the notion that art should instruct has fallen into disrepute in modern times. What kind of instruction can modern art offer? What function can art have but that of pleasant diversion? such is what the new patrons of the arts, the middle class, expect, and such is what they got, though not from the artists about whom we are speaking. The middle class wanted (still does) to see itself glorified, as the former ruling class had been by its artists. Instead it has been served up images of its nightmares. When the government planner, the bureaucrat, the technician, the business person look to W.B. Yeats for commendation and memorialization of their great achievements they find instead contempt, revulsion, and a prophecy of imminent and absolute doom:

> Turning and turning in the widening gyre
> The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
> Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
> Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
> The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
> The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
> The best lack all conviction, while the worst
> Are full of passionate intensity.
> ("The Second Coming")

Such an image is what Picasso treats them to in "Guernica," or Hemingway in **A Farewell to Arms,** or Faulkner in **The Sound and the Fury.** For many years the poem that seemed to best express the sense of modern life was T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land." The sense of the utter barrenness is projected in the second stanza against the background of **Ecclesiastes:**

> What are the roots that clutch, what branches grow
> Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
> You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
> A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
> And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
> And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
> There is a shadow under this red rock
> (Come in under the shadow of this red rock),
> And I will show you something different from either
> Your shadow at morning striding behind you
> Or your shadow at evening rising to meet you;
> I will show you fear in a handful of dust.

The point of this discussion is that poetry, the arts in general, have played a critical role in the formation of modern consciousness. Poetry has done so by reminding us of a core of values once held sacred and setting them against modern values which seem to be leading us into disaster. Therefore, it should be emphasized also that poetry has not lost its function of instruction, but we should understand, instead, that its lessons are anti-establishment. Modern poets are speaking out of a sense of the value of the past and its utter corruption in the present.

BRIEF LIST OF RECOMMENDED POEMS

The poems which I am recommending are a small fraction of the poems that I could be recommending. Modern poetry presents an embarrassment of riches and the only meaningful selection process is personal taste. Your taste ought to be the primary basis for selection. If you don't relate to a poem, don't use it. Find poems you enjoy and that are meaningful to you. The following list contains poems by Irish, English, and American poets mostly written during the first four decades of this century. I'm using the beginning of World War II as the cutoff for the modernist period.

This photograph of "Discontent" by William S. Schwartz is printed through the cooperation of the Illinois State Museum.

Schwartz combines medieval Christian subject matter (the artist as central figure is Christ-like) and modern subject matter representing the suffering of the poor.

Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago

An example of art socially committed, using techniques of modern expression. The subject matter is historical, but the anguish of the inner struggle, of the characters is emphasized not through realistic detail but the exaggeration of line and color.

W.H. Auden (1907-73)

"The Unknown Citizen"

E.E. Cummings (1894-1962)

"My Father Moved Through Dooms of Love"
"I Sing of Olaf"
"Anyone Lived in a Pretty How Town"

T.S. Eliot (1888-1965)

"The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock"
"Preludes"
"Rhapsody on a Windy Night"

Robert Frost (1875-1963)

"Neither Out Far Nor In Deep"
"Provide Provide"
"The Onset"
"Design"
"Mending Wall"
"The Road Not Taken"
"After Apple-Picking"

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889—although not a modern by chronological criteria, he is in every other way)

"God's Grandeur"
"Pied Beauty"
"Hurrahing in Harvest"
"The Windhover"
"The Caged Skylark"

Archibald MacLeish (1892-)

"Ars Poetica"

Marianne Moore (1887-1972)

"Poetry"

Wilfred Owen (1893-1918)

"Greater Love"
"The Send-Off"
"The show"
"Dulce Et Decorum Est"
"Anthem for Doomed Youth"
"Arms and the Boy"
"Strange Meeting"

Ezra Pound (1885-1972)

"The River-Merchant's Wife: A Letter"
"The Seafarer"
"Ballad of the Goodly Fere"

Edith Sitwell (1887-1969)

"Still Falls the Rain"

Wallace Stevens (1879-1955)

"Connoisseur of Chaos"
"The Glass of Water"
"Sunday Morning"

William Butler Yeats (1865-1939)

"When You Are Old"
"The Lake Isle of Innisfree"
"Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen"
"A Prayer for My Daughter"
"The Second Coming"
"A Dialogue of Self and Soul"
"Sailing to Byzantium"
"Crazy Jane Talks with the Bishop"

Minority Poets

James Weldon Johnson (1871-1938)

God's Trombones

Langston Hughes (1902-1967)

"Brass Spittons"
"The Negro Speaks of Rivers"
"I, Too"
"Personal"
"Dream Variation"
"Lenox Avenue Mural"

Robert Hayden (1913-)

"A Ballad of Remembrance"
"Witch Doctor"
"Middle Passage"
"Veracruz"

MODERN FICTION

MODERNISM AND MODERN FICTION

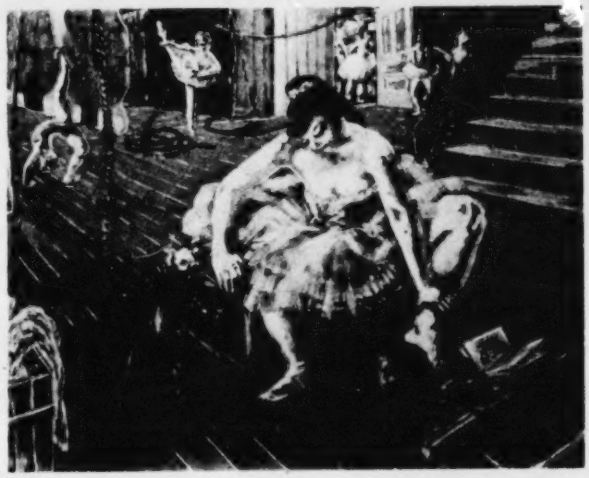
Teaching modern fiction ought to be as fascinating and challenging as teaching modern poetry. Modern fiction is more difficult than modern poetry, if only because of its length. One way to understand the challenge is to consider that the modern novel is a modern poem that the author could not condense to one or several pages. If Eliot's "The Waste Land" is loose and sprawling, think of it in relation to Joyce's **Ulysses** (dare I mention **Finnegan's Wake?**); **Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury, Light in August,** or **Absalom, Absalom!;** Thomas Mann's **The Magic Mountain;** Marcel Proust's **Remembrance of Things Past;** or John Dos Passos' **USA.** Moderns had so much to say that even with the utilization of a variety of new techniques (stream of consciousness, flash-back, mythic analogy) they couldn't condense. Instead they became more expansive. It's not that they didn't try; most of these writers have written magnificent shorter pieces, clear and concise images of modern experience (e.g. Joyce's **Dubliners,** Faulkner's "The Bear," Mann's **Death in Venice,** and Dos Passos' **Manhatten Transfer).** But they were not satisfied that they had rendered the whole truth.

The modern fiction writer is a frustrated poet. To understand this proposition is to understand a great deal about modern fiction: its form, techniques, content, and style. It is to understand what Ezra Pound meant in his injunction to poets that poetry must be at least as well written as prose. For so long a stepchild of the arts, by the end of the nineteenth century the novel had achieved prominence as the most accomplished form of literary art. That achievement is mainly the result of Gustave Flaubert and Henry James, in whose novels the literary world recognized a perfection of artistry that had not yet been seen. Works such as Flaubert's **Madame Bovary** and James' **Portrait of a Lady, The Ambassador,** and **The Golden Bowl** were proclaimed to be models of perfected craft, exquisite technique rendering stories of enormous power, subtlety, and depth. For the first time in the writing of novels, every word became important, not, as it had been, to earn the author more money, but for its integral and organic relationship to the total design. Although neither writer was popular with large numbers of people, they exerted an enormous influence over their peers and successors.

Indeed, the second half of the 19th century is dominated by great achievements in the novel. What poets can you think of that compare with such names as Flaubert, Stendhal, Zola, Balzac, Dostoyevsky, Tolstoy, Dickens, George Eliot, Melville, Hawthorne, and Twain? Poets such as Tennyson, Whitman, Pushkin, and Baudelaire. But their reading public was miniscule compared with the novelists'. Only European theatre in the work of Chekov, Strindberg, and Ibsen could be compared for its influence on the development of modern consciousness and modern literary art. Moreover, and most important, the novelists had absorbed poetic technique into novel writing and were writing better poetry, if more diffused, than the poets. The two most important developments were the attempt to purge the novel of discourse (sound familiar?) in order that it might become more dramatic, appear less contrived and thus more true to life. Secondly, they tried to achieve an interpenetration of subject and object, to let experience take hold of us in the fullness of its life and energy. As Flaubert put it: "Exterior Reality must enter into us, almost make us cry out with it, if we are to reproduce it well."

THE POETICS OF MODERN FICTION

What makes the modern novel different from its predecessors is the fact that novelists no longer believed that they were "holding the mirror up to nature" to reflect an image of general truths. Rather, they felt, like Flaubert, that they were expressing, rendering, creating nature, not imitating or mirroring it. Moreover, there is no such thing as one subject better than another or that only certain people or situations are appropriate. While writing **Madame Bovary**, Flaubert said: "If the book I am writing with so much trouble comes out well, by its very existence I shall have established these two truths, which to me are axiomatic; first, that poetry is purely subjective, that in literature there are no fine artistic subjects . . . and that consequently one subject is as good as another. **It is up to the artist to raise everything."** We need only compare such statements with William Carlos Williams' "No ideas but in things." Thus Flaubert could say about **Madame Bovary:** "The story, the plot of a novel is of no interest to me. When I write a novel I aim at rendering a color, a shade. For instance, in. . .**Madame Bovary,** all I wanted to do was to render a grey color, the mouldy color of a wood-louse's existence." Such, we might argue, is the ultimate of subjectivity.



This photograph of "Bunny Backstage" by Julia Theda is printed through the cooperation of the Illinois State Museum.

The entire scene is distorted, slightly fantastic as the artist attempts to render the scene not as it is, but as he "sees it" or feels it should be seen. The reality of this painting is in the artist's imagination, not in the original scene.

Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago

The beginning of the assimilation of realistic detail into the sensual possibilities of color and light. Impressionism, the study of a subject under the influence of a particular lighting condition, prepared the way for imagism.

the recognition by the artist that his objective is to render **his** sense of his subject.

Flaubert's attitude is quite close to what we speak of today in painting as Impressionism, whose masters include Manet, Monet, Degas, and Renior. Their objective was to record the impression the subject made on the artist, rather than to hold to some concept of absolute form and color which, through painstaking attention, could be reproduced in all its detail on canvas. Perhaps the most difficult part of this movement or style of representation to keep in perspective is that the artists believed themselves to be machines of perception. They believed they were recording without interference or alteration from their thinking and emotional nature their sense experience of their subject. The importance of capturing that moment for eternity (it is important to recognize that this is an eternity of **Objets d'art**) was paramount, as it was to Keats in his "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Walter Pater, one of the great prose writers of the latter part of the century, put it this way: "Every moment some form grows more perfect in hand or face; some tone on the hills or the sea is choicer than the rest; some mood of passion or insight or intellectual excitement is irresistibly real and attractive for—for that moment only." Joseph Conrad takes this declaration one step further by emphasizing that in his view rendering of such moments is the only access to truth we may know:

> To snatch in a moment of courage, from the remorseless rush of time, a passing phase of life, is only the beginning of the task. The task approached in tenderness and faith is to hold up unquestioningly, without choice and without fear, the rescued fragment before all eyes and in the light of a sincere mood. It is to show its vibration, its colour, its form; and through its movement, its form, and its colour, reveal the substance of its truth—disclose its inspiring secret: the stress and passion within the core of each convincing moment."

You may detect the voices of Whitehead, Einstein, and Heisenberg underlying this sense of flux and change as the nature of experience, reality itself: Modernism is a confluent stream in which the discoveries of the philosophers, scientists, painters, sculptors, dancers, composers, and literary artists reinforce and overlap each other. Thus if life is flux and flow, an idea as ancient as the Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, why not the mind itself? In 1890, William James, the brother of the famous novelist Henry James, wrote in his influential **Principles of Psychology** that consciousness too flows: "let us call it the stream of thought, of consciousness, or of subjective life." In that stream, images are floating "steeped and aged in the free water that flows around it." Their significance comes from the "halo or penumbra that surrounds and escorts" them. Virginia Woolf adapted this perception to suit the explanation of the work of the modern novelist. After arguing against the constraints previous novelists were under to make plots and to provide comedy, tragedy, love interest, and an air of probability, she writes:

> Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being "like this." Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad of impressions—trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel. From all sides they come, an incessant shower of innumerable atoms; and as they fall, as they shape themselves into the life of Monday or Tuesday, the accent falls differently from of old; the moment of importance came not here but there; so that, if a writer were a free man and not a slave, if he could write what he chose, not what he must, if he could base his work upon his own feeling and not upon convention, there would be no plot, no comedy, no tragedy, no love interest or catastrophe in the accepted style, and perhaps not a single button sewn on as the Bond Street tailors would have it. **Life is not a series of gig lamps symmetrically arranged; life is a luminous halo, a semi-transparent envelope surrounding us from the beginning of consciousness to the end.** Is it not the task of the novelist to convey this varying, this unknown and uncircumscribed spirit, whatever aberration or complexity it may display, with as little mixture of the alien and external as possible?
>
> (italics added)

Her goal, as she said, was "to give the moment whole: whatever it includes," and "to eliminate all waste, deadness, superfluity . . .".

Woolf's argument was as much a manifesto for, as a description of, what she and her contemporaries were doing: Conrad in "The Heart of Darkness" (1899), **Lord Jim** (1900), **Nostromo** (1904); Joyce in **Dubliners** and **A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man;** Lawrence in **Sons and Lovers;** Hemingway in **The Sun Also Rises;** Faulkner in **The Sound and the Fury;** Forster in **A Passage to India;** Green in **Brighton Rock;** Malraux in **Man's Fate;** Mann in **Death in Venice;** and Woolf herself in **To the Lighthouse.**

But oh, the subjectivity of it all! To borrow from one of our best contemporary critics (Randall Jarrell): did they really believe along with T.S. Eliot that such works directed toward the examination and exploration of the innermost workings of the human psyche could possibly be an escape from the personality of the artist? Is it possible that the older Joyce could believe with his youthful counterpart Stephen Dedalus when he proclaims enthusiastically in **A Portrait of the Artist:** "The personality of the artist, at first a cry or a cadence or a mood and then a fluid and lambent narrative, finally refines itself out of existence, impersonalizes itself, so to speak. . .The artist, like the God of the creation, remains within or behind or beyond or above his handiwork, invisible, refined out of existence, indifferent, paring his fingernails"? Is Stephen merely echoing Flaubert, the master craftsman who wrote 50 years before him that his masterpiece, **Madame Bovary,** "is a **totally fictitious** story," containing "none of [his] feelings and no details from [his] own life"? "The illusion of truth (if there is one)," he argues, "comes, on the contrary, from the book's impersonality. It is one of my principles that a writer should not be his own theme. An artist must be in his work like God in creation, invisible and all-powerful; he should be everywhere felt, but nowhere seen."

This photograph of "Slaughter House Ruins at Aledo" by Gertrude Abercrombie.

This picture incorporates dream-like images, which apparently have no logical connection, but have subconscious and unconscious suggestiveness. The picture represents everybody's and nobody's dream life.

Perhaps most fascinating about all of this need both to declare intensely subjective works free of the personality of the author and at the same time to appropriate high priestly, if not godlike, functions for the artist, is that the louder the protest, the greater the truth it seeks to hide. The writers, indeed, protested too much. Do not be taken in by all we have said about intentions, which in this case obscure other, more hidden, motivations. The artists were infected with the new scientism, and so many tried to follow Flaubert in the rejection of 19th-century romanticism in which the personality of the artist was primary: "Art must rise above personal emotions and nervous susceptibilities. It is time to endow it with pitiless method, with the exactness of the physical sciences." In the twentieth century, artists had to vie with the new high priests of science for a place in the temple of modern life. There is good reason to believe that they found that place only posthumously, and, like the saints of old, were enshrined when they were no longer threatening.

HOW TO TEACH NOVELS: A CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE ON TEACHING LITERATURE

It is difficult to overemphasize the modern novelists' sense of ambiguity. The only certainty in modern fiction is that nothing is certain. Sounds like a paradox, but all you have to do is study the variety of critical judgments and understandings of any major or minor work of modern literature to understand it. Critics have been trying to outdo each other for years in getting at **the truth** of any work. Remember, when your students come up with differing understandings from each other and from you, that **no one** can say definitely that "this, that, or the other thing" is what a story means. On the other hand, I have been horrified at the number of students I have taught who have come from high school classes where they **claim** they were taught that one interpretation is as good as another. No, I'm not about to contradict myself when I say that such an understanding is false and very damaging to literary appreciation. Often interpretation suffers from ignorance of the text, the meaning of words, contexts, manners and morals of specific ages, formal literary conventions, other works by the same author, what the author said he/she intended, and the meaning of specific symbols or their history (think of such obvious ones as the name "Mary," or the age of 33, Christ's age when he died). It is essential that students develop a sense of these contexts of meaning. The more that anyone knows about them, the better he/she will understand the work of literature, **even** if that understanding differs completely from yours **or** mine.

Therefore, don't look for one interpretation. Encourage your students in the belief that works of literature are subject to an infinite variety of interpretations, are as various as are their readers. But don't let them settle for easy interpretations; get them to explain. Then help them develop the ability to listen to the interpretation of others. In the give–and–take of a free and open discussion, students will change their minds when presented with convincing proof that their perspective has ignored certain important information, or that they have simply misread all or part of the text. And in changing their minds they may come to new and other conclusions, possibly as different from anyone else's as before; but the important thing is that they will have done so through the absorption of new information and insight.

Once more: don't fall into the trap of thinking your understanding is the right one or the best one; it may be, but you'll have to keep that conviction from your students, lest you intimidate them by making them feel that their interpretations are inadequate and unacceptable. On the contrary, the single most important objective in the teaching of literature is to help your students develop a sense of adequacy and worth in their relationship to literature. Only then will they continue to enjoy reading and to develop their taste. As teachers of English you've probably heard as frequently as I the remark from the layperson: "English was always my worst subject," or, "I never was much good at reading." Everyone should learn to love to read, learn to love literature, and if you must give grades then you should do so on the basis of how much a student loves literature, not on how much he/she knows about it.

Is it possible to devise an evaluation for the purpose of grading that takes into consideration the richness of the students' **personal experience** with literature as **primary,** and treat memory of characters, plot, symbols, images, structure, and even well articulated analysis as secondary? If you place as your highest priority helping your students learn to love and appreciate reading, you can do it. Of course, you'll have to be subjective in your evaluation, and you may be mistaken or even fooled by some who will try to pour on the "oh, how I love this D.H. Lawrence. He means so much to me!" Obviously an "A" response in my scale of values. But think about the others, not the few exceptions who will slip by anyway, one way or another. Think of their freedom to express themselves, how they feel about a work of literature,

Courtesy of the Art Institute of Chicago

The picture incorporates dream-like images, which apparently have no logical connection, but have subconscious and unconscious suggestiveness. The picture represents everybody's and nobody's dream life.

what they think of it. That's all they will ever do as adults, unless they become teachers of English, in which case they have at least four years of college English courses to get fully indoctrinated into the mysteries of form, structure, symbolism, figurative language, and literary criticism. I'm not saying you shouldn't introduce them to these mysteries, but don't harp on them. Treat them as secondary to the primary purpose – do you remember it without my repeating it?

MODERN FICTION: ANALYSIS OF SPECIFIC WORKS

This section begins with an analysis of Conrad's "Heart of Darkness," in which I demonstrate what I think constitutes a good approach to literature. Next will be a brief introduction to such works as James Joyce's **A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man,** E.M. Forsters' **A Passage to India,** Ernest Hemingway's **A Farewell to Arms,** Albert Camus' **The Stranger,** D.H. Lawrence's "The Rocking Horse Winner" and **Sons and Lovers,** and Jean Toomer's **Cane.** Moreover, you will find a list of other suitable and highly recommended works which you should consider as good as the selections for which I have provided introductions. In addition to their merit as works of literature and as modernist works in particular, my selection represents an attempt to provide examples of works from several different cultures which reflect a concern for problems of race, nationalism, colonialism, exploitation of peoples; religion and survival of persons in an increasingly hostile world. I am recommending readings by blacks and Jews, and by British, American, German, French, Irish, and Algerian writers.

THE HEART OF DARKNESS

I want to begin the discussion of modern fiction with a work that has been close to me since my first encounter with it as a freshman in college, Joseph Conrad's **"Heart of Darkness."** The story first appeared in 1899 in **Blackwood's Magazine,** and then three years later, 1902, in book form. Too long for a short story, it's too short for a novel; in the edition I'm using (the Norton critical edition, revised and edited by Robert Kimbrough, 1971, paper) there are not quite 80 pages of text, though abundant annotations, background material, sources, and criticism comprising nearly 200 pages. Such a work may be called a novelette. Although **"Heart of Darkness"** is one of Conrad's early works, clearly it is one of his most accomplished. His critics agree that in terms of compactness, economy of expression, and depth, the work is unsurpassed even by such fine novels as **Lord Jim** (1900), **Nostromo** (1904), **The Secret Agent** (1907), **Under Western Eyes** (1911), and **Victory** (1914). In the opinion of experts, it is one of the best written and most fascinating stories of modern times.

My approach to the work will be primarily personal, as the reading of literature is meant to be, a communication between one person and another. I do not share in the view that a text is something to look at objectively and analyze. In my view, that kind of analysis belongs in the laboratory; more appropriate to scientific inquiry than to literary study.

Only a few of your students will appreciate an analytical approach, and those most likely will go on to read for pleasure anyway. You want to interest all the rest, and one way to do it is to consider the work of literature as a formal communication between author and reader. "What has Conrad said to you through **"Heart of Darkness" is finally the most important question.**

Your job will be to help your students understand what Conrad is saying by helping them learn to read, which means helping them to decipher the symbols and codes in which he presents his "message" or story. Strange and fascinating is that title: what does it mean? What does it conjure in your mind? Explore openly and freely by "brainstorming" or by free association what your students thought of when they heard it for the first time; after they had read the story; after you have discussed the story together with them. And what a symbol system it is! A matrix of associations, of meanings derived from a wide-ranging and deep cultural experience. The title suggests depth and journey, back into the interior, back to the primordial oneness of things, "the heart of the matter," which is also total darkness. It is a darkness that recalls the world before God created light; the heavens and the earth; birds, beast, and man to reflect "His" glory. It is undifferentiated matter and energy, it is pre-birth–dark as the womb–and afterlife–the darkness of the grave. The darkness is that form which we came before we were ourselves; it is the Dark Ages, time in human history before the rule of law, before civilization when the strongest ruled by brute force and animal cunning. As the chief character in the story would have it, in describing England before it became civilized:

> "And this also," said Marlow suddenly, "has been one of the dark places of the earth. . . . I was thinking of very old times, when the Romans first came here, nineteen hundred years ago–. . .Sandbanks, marshes, forests, savages–precious little to eat for a civilized man, nothing but Thames water to drink. . .Here and there a military camp lost in a wilderness, like a needle in a bundle of hay–cold, fog, tempests, disease, exile, and death–death skulking in the air, in the water, in the bush. Oh yes–he did it. . .Or think of a decent young citizen in a toga–perhaps too much dice, you know–coming out here in the train of some prefect, or tax-gatherer, or trader, even, to mend his fortunes. Land in a swamp, march through the woods, and in some inland post feel the savagery, the utter savagery, had closed around him–all that mysterious life of the wilderness that stirs in the forest, in the jungles, in the hearts of wild men. He has to live in the midst of the incomprehensible, which is also detestable. And it has a fascination, too, that goes to work upon him. The fascination of the abomination–you know. Imagine the growing regrets, the longing to escape, the powerless disgust, the surrender, the hate." (pp. 5-6)

Marlow is opening up that "can of worms" Hannah Arendt called "the banality of evil," in reference to the utterly commonplace, unimaginative character of Nazis such as Eichmann, capable of monstrous murders, but from paltry motives. Marlow continues:

"But these chaps were not much account, really. They were no colonists; their administration was merely a squeeze, and nothing more, I suspect. They were conquerors, and for that you want only brute force—nothing to boast of, when you have it, since your strength is just an accident arising from the weakness of others. They grabbed what they could get for the sake of what was to be got. It was just robbery with violence, aggravated murder on a great scale, and men going at it blind—as is very proper for those who tackle a darkness. The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look at it too much." (p. 7)

I can remember being fascinated by this analysis of colonialism, finding it so boldly put—and so accurate—in a work of fiction written at the turn of the century. Marlow has moved from the blind terror in the human "heart" which causes it to hate and want to destroy what it doesn't understand or hasn't dominated (another form of destruction) to consideration of economic motives and colonialist foreign policy. The range is enormous, the depth of insight profound. Such is what you have to help your students **see.**

A short while ago, I suggested that your job is to help your students learn to read. Let me now define that objective in terms of helping them to see. How important that was to Conrad and his contemporaries can be seen in this passionate argument:

Art itself may be defined as a single-minded attempt to render the highest kind of justice to the visible universe, by bringing to light the truth, manifold and one, underlying its every aspect. It is an attempt to find in its forms, in its colours, in its light, in its shadows, in the aspects of matter and in the facts of life, what of each is fundamental, what is enduring and essential—their one illuminating and convincing quality—the very truth of their existence. . .My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you **see.** That—and no more, and it is everything. (PP. 145-47)

How he is able to make us see and how you can help your students see is the subject of this entire section on modern fiction.

A large part of the language I have quoted from **"Heart of Darkness"** has been discourse, Marlow expounding ideas which are meant to explain, if not to illuminate, the essential and enduring qualities of the scene he has described for us. But the scene itself is most striking—"the darkness," "sandbanks," "marshes," "forests," "savages," "the desolate military outposts," lost in the wilderness; the sultry, damp-death-laden air; the traders, governors, soldiers of fortune skirting the fringe of the wilderness. The description is rich in imagery and evokes from us associations which antidate the dawn of human consciousness. Part of the stored memory, the genetic makeup of human beings, is the collective inheritance of the process of evolution. According to Carl Jung we have never forgotten, can never forget the slime, the ocean, and the wilds from which we came. And the fascination of the wild, the original state of nature, intensifies the more civilized we become. The current state of our music and dancing is closer to what we think of as primitive, African, than at any other time in the last 2,000 years of our history. As we can learn from Conrad, being modern means having at our disposal a fantastic array of machines with which to support or destroy life and at the same time an obsession with violence and destruction, a primitive instinct to leave all the comfort behind and reestablish contact with a more basic and thoroughly uncomfortable self. Freud describes the process in **Civilization and Its Discontents,** excellent supplementary reading for modern literature.

Let us look further into the matter of how Conrad renders these ideas. As in any well written poem, the meaning of the whole is presented in embryo in the opening lines, or in the first few paragraphs. To enlarge on the biological analogy, each line, every word, like each cell developing during the process of gestation, takes on the shape and function predetermined by a single all-encompassing idea, or genetic arrangement. Conrad paints a scene for us to visualize. Several men are patiently awaiting the turn of the tide that will take their small sailing craft down the Thames and into the English Channel. But how rich is the description!

The **Nellie,** a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, and was at rest. The flood had made, the wind was nearly calm, and being bound down the river, the only thing for it was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide.

The sea-reach of the Thames stretched before us like the beginning of an interminable waterway. In the offing the sea and the sky were welded together without a joint, and in the luminous space the tanned sails of the barges drifting up with the tide seemed to stand still in red clusters of canvas sharply peaked, with gleams of varnished sprits. A haze rested on the low shores that ran out to sea in vanishing flatness. The air was dark above Gravesend, and farther back still seemed condensed into a mournful gloom, brooding motionless over the biggest, and the greatest, town on earth. (p. 3)

Next is a description of the captain and his crew, a Director of Companies, a Lawyer, Marlow, and the narrator himself, followed by this magnificent account:

The day was ending in a serenity of still and exquisite brilliance. The water shone pacifically; the sky, without a speck, was a benign immensity of unstained light; the very mist on the Essex marshes was a gauzy and radiant fabric, hung from the wooded rises inland, draping the low shores in diaphanous folds. Only the gloom to the west, brooding over the upper reaches, became more sombre every minute, as if angered by the approach of the sun.

And at last, in its curved and imperceptible fall, the sun sank low, and from glowing white changed to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men. (p. 4)

What have we seen? First of all, no one will have seen quite the same scene, despite the vividness of the detailed rendering. Here, then, is **one** reading. The description represents a state of limbo, a state of waiting, a suspension of action. This sense of suspension is transferred to us in the rocking motion of the prose, its rhythms suggesting a state of suspended motion: "The Nellie, [pause] a cruising yawl, [pause] swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails, [pause] and was at rest. [stop] The flood had made, [pause] the wind was nearly calm, [pause] and being bound down the river, [pause] the only thing for it was to come to and wait for the turn of the tide." [stop] In such a state, to will is useless, absurd; the men wait on larger forces; tide and time. Undulating peacefully in that expanse of water, earth, and sky, mind and matter merge: the sky becomes a mirror of the mind of the beholder. Seeking to escape a sense of gloom-tomb embodied in the city (Gravesend), the narrator—a surrogate for Conrad himself—looks to the east and escapes into an infinity of water and sky, projected as a "benign immensity of unstained light"—a beautific vision if there ever was one. Even the mists coming off the marshes are radiant and endow the surrounding shores with a sense of rich drapery. Finally the sun falls and changes from "glowing white. . .to a dull red without rays and without heat, as if about to go out suddenly, stricken to death by the touch of that gloom brooding over a crowd of men." (p. 4)

These opening paragraphs present us with two worlds, light and life, darkness and death. The waterway is a road on which to travel in the search for the meaning of that dichotomy. Such is the ostensible plot of the story: Marlow relates a tale of his quest into the heart of the Congo in search of that indefinable, mysterious, and alluringly primal core of human experience, the secrets of the heart, the mystery of life.

It would give me great pleasure to continue this exploration, but instead, I want to direct your attention to other aspects of the story, which you may wish to explore for yourself and with your students. I think it is important to concentrate on concrete matters, rather than large abstractions such as what is the theme of the story, what does the story mean? Concentrate instead on two more basic levels: (1) what happens and **how** does it happen (e.g., what makes Marlow or Kurtz decide to go on this journey? What makes Kurtz change? What was he before the change and what has he become?); and (2) remember that Conrad wants the reader to experience the world he presents through all senses: taste, touch, hearing, smell, and most importantly sight. Spend all the time you can on the imagery; it is better in the long run that your students remember vivid scenes from the story than that they remember only something vague about its theme. The recollection of the images will give them the necessary clue to what the story is about. It is difficult, for example, to forget such a powerful image as Marlow's description of the French man-of-war anchored off the African coast firing into the dark continent:

> There wasn't even a shed there, and she was shelling the bush. It appears the French had one of their wars going on thereabouts. Her ensign dropped limp like a rag; the muzzles of the long six-inch guns stuck out all over the low hull; the greasy, slimy swell swung her up lazily and let her down, swaying her thin masts. In the empty immensity of earth, sky, and water, there she was, incomprehensible, firing into a continent. Pop, would go one of the six-inch guns; a small flame would dart and vanish, a little white smoke would disappear, a tiny projectile would give a feeble screech—and nothing happened. (p. 14)

Of course there are other important matters which you may want to consider, not the least of which is the extent to which the story is basically true and autobiographical. The truth is that Marlow's experience is Conrad's, and you may read about Conrad's own accounts of his experience that he used in writing the novel in any one of the three excellent case books on **"The Heart of Darkness": Bruce Harkness, ed., Conrad's "Heart of Darkness" and the Critics** (San Francisco, 1960); Leonard F. Dean, ed., **Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness": Backgrounds and Criticisms** (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1960); Robert Kimbrough, ed., **"Heart of Darkness": An authoritative Text, Backgrounds and Sources, Essays in Criticism** (New York, 1963)—this last, as the title indicates, is the most complete and the one I recommend.

Furthermore, you might wish to consider the relevance of the very strong attack on the interference by force in the lives of what we now call Third World people. Such an attack makes the story timely, not only because of our recent experience in Vietnam, but because of our increasing involvement and that of several other Caucasian nations in Angola. You might want to consider Conrad's recognition of the natives as human beings, his respect for their way of life; his rejection of European civilization; indeed, his attitude toward life in the modern world; his sense of the need for adventure or meaningful quest; his psychological insights; his sense of ecology,history, philosophy; his perspective on the machine and modern technology, on urban life, on women, on men, on the sea, on the East (Marlow is described as "ascetic," resembling an "idol," "a Buddha") as opposed to the West.

Finally, you might want to look at Conrad's way of telling the story. Notice the double narrator technique: someone, unidentified by name, is on the same boat with Marlow, and this someone tells us the story he says he heard from Marlow. Ask yourself the question, why not have Marlow tell his own story? In fact why not use third-person objective narrator to tell the story? Why two first-person narrators? What does Conrad gain by this device? Is the story more or less convincing? Is it more or less meaningful? My personal perspective is that Marlow is Conrad and that the first narrator is a device Conrad uses to distance himself from the tale. I view the story Marlow tells as the story of Marlow and his quest. Kurtz is a reflection of something deep in him. I view the first narrator as Conrad the judge, or the critical side of Conrad, his bourgeois, social self who says to his other Marlow-self: "Are you for real?" Marlow is, after all, just a little incredible.

If you share this perspective or hold one similar, you then must face the problem of irony. In this distancing technique, the author seeks to disassociate himself as far as possible from the story and let all of its ambiguities and ambivalences

stand by themselves. As the first narrator says of Marlow, just as true of Conrad: "to him the meaning of an episode was not inside like a kernel but outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze, in the likeness of one of these misty halos that sometimes are made visible by the spectral illumination of moonshine." (p. 5) So it is with this story. See how bright you can make that glow, and your students may never forget this tale.

A PORTRAIT OF THE ARTIST AS A YOUNG MAN

James Joyce's **A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man** (1916) ought to be of interest to young men and women. It is an engrossing account of the life of one Stephen Dedalus (a projection of James Joyce himself) from his infancy to his first year in the university. Unique about this novel and revolutionary for its day, is the fact that it is the first novel in the English language to attempt to represent the consciousness of a character, the contents of consciousness without authorial intervention. The language of the novel attempts to render the changing, evolving level of consciousness at each significant stage of the boy's growth. And each of these stages is rendered in terms only of the most significant formative experiences. Thus experiences are cumulative.

As each of the five chapters in the life of Stephen Dedalus unfolds, we see the new experience developing out of the old, as we can see in the growth of a plant all of its elements in the seed from which it grows. By the end of the relatively short novel (253 pages), we know more about the inner workings of Stephen Dedalus' mind than any other previous character in literary history. At the same time, I want to emphasize, we don't know him nearly as fully as a person with relationships to others, as we know for example Dostoevsky's Raskolnikov or Prince Mishkin, Shakespeare's Hamlet or Macbeth, or Melville's Ahab. The reason we do not is because we don't see him from any perspective other than his own. Modern psychology has made us realize that a self is the sum total of all of its relationships with others (see Irving Goffman's **The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life,** R.D. Laing's **The Self and Others).**

One of the mistakes that many people make when they think about modern literature is that it is all terribly difficult and written only for the highly sophisticated. Although there is a great deal of truth in that statement despite artists' strong denial (think of Pound's **Cantos**, Joyce's **Finnegan's Wake,** Eliot's **Four Quartets,** Rilke's **Duino Elegies),** there is also a strong urge to break out of the cage of a too highly refined sophistication and return to the simple days, even when not pleasurable, of one's childhood. Late Picasso and mature Klee and Matisse paintings are such undertakings. So too is **Portrait,** which begins with what might be described as a hymn to infancy:

> Once upon a time and a very good time it was there was a moocow coming down along the road and this moocow that was down along the road met a nicens little boy named baby tuckoo. . . .
>
> His father told him that story: his father looked at him through a glass: he had a hairy face.
>
> He was baby tuckoo. The moocow came down the road where Betty Byrne lived: she sold lemon platt.
>
> **O, the wild rose blossoms**
> **On the little green place.**
>
> He sang that song. That was his song.
>
> **O, the green wothe botheth.**
>
> When you wet the bed, first it is warm then it gets cold. His mother put on the oilsheet. That had the queer smell.
>
> His mother had a nicer smell than his father. She played on the piano the sailor's hornpipe for him to dance. He danced:
>
> Tralala lala,
> Tralala tralaladdy,
> Tralala lala,
> Tralala lala
>
> (p. 7)

Such is the first stage of the formation of the consciousness of the child. He is, of course, the product of his biological heredity, but what we observe is the influence of the environment on the formation of his personality, character, expectations, and values. (One could teach this novel strictly from the point of view of developmental psychology, or adolescent of child psychology, and have remarkable insights into the nature of psychological development.)

This baby language style is meant to reflect the perspective of an infant. The level of consciousness is almost purely that of sense recognition: things seen, touched, tasted, smelled, and heard. Nevertheless, the infant does not experience these sense perceptions independent of his **own feelings.** He discriminates between pleasurable and unpleasurable sensations and in so doing is ordering his values and defining **his** behavior (response) to those people and things which make up his world. Primary is father who looks at him through a glass and has a hairy face. Not nearly so pleasant as mother who smells nicer and who helps him dance. Father is story teller, mother music maker; father entertains, stimulates his mind, his imagination; mother stimulates his body, causes him to move in sensual rhythm. Betty Byrne is a girl who sells lemon platt; it must have been delicious, for the infant breaks into song. "his song," about wild roses and green places. Woman: earth, air, and water (mother changes the bed and takes away the cold damp), flowers, sweetness. Man: stiff, formal, aloof, hairy, shortsighted (the "glass" is a monacle), teller of tales, but makes nothing happen.

This is but some of the important information Joyce gives us in these opening paragraphs, which as I indicated about opening paragraphs in the discussion of **"Heart of Darkness,"** contain the entire story in embryo. On one level **Portrait** is the story of creation of a self (self-system) in relation to

significant others, most importantly mother and father. The novel culminates and concludes in the escape from the dependency on the parents, and in the assertion of a free and autonomous self. In the famous concluding lines of the novel from Stephen's diary:

> April 26: Mother is putting my new secondhand clothes in order. She prays now, she says, that I may learn in my own life and away from home and friends what the heart is and what it feels. Amen. So be it. Welcome, O life! I go to encounter for the millionth time the reality of experience and to forge in the smithy of my soul the uncreated conscience of my race.
>
> April 27: Old father, old artificer, stand me now and ever in good stead.
>
> (p. 253)

Such youthful optimism and arrogance! Your students may not see it that way, they are probably too close to the experience to recognize that the older Joyce sees his youthful counterpart or self ironically. Indeed, the entire novel is an exercise in dramatic irony, which Joyce uses as a means of distancing himself from his hero. It is the same kind of irony we use in describing ourselves as we once were in high school, that person and experience we look back on with some embarrassment and perhaps fondness, but always with the sense of "Was that really me? Could I have done those things? Thought those thoughts? Felt that way?" Perhaps your students will understand if you ask them to think about themselves in junior high school. Have them describe themselves, or write about themselves. I have no doubt they too will see their former selves ironically.

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For additional information on Joyce and **Portrait** you may wish to consult some of these excellent studies:

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A PASSAGE TO INDIA

E.M. Forster's classic novel **A Passage to India** (1924) is timeless in its relevance to problems of human relationship, the colonizer and the colonized, and the separation of East and West. If you are looking for a novel that will help your students understand the attitudes of the Third World or the Emerging Nations towards white, Anglo-Saxon Europeans and Americans, or for that matter the attitudes of minorities—blacks, Chicanos, Puerto Ricans, Indians, and Orientals—toward White America, this novel will provide a broad-ranging, international and archetypal perspective on problems we too often tend to think of as endemic to America. Indeed racial prejudice, discrimination, and exploitation of native and minority populations are a prominent part of world problems and an ancient one as well. If you are using Conrad's novelette, "Heart of Darkness," you might want to compare the European exploitation of the Africans, as Conrad so brilliantly renders, with the British exploitation of Indians. Indeed, to round out the treatment, you might consider comparing either or both of these works to a novel by a black American writer such as Richard Wright's **Native Son,** Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man,** James Baldwin's **Go Tell It on the Mountain,** or Claude Brown's autobiographical **Manchild in the Promised Land.** Such comparison will produce great insight into the problem of race in America in the larger context of world-wide issues.

The novel itself tells the story of an incredibly complex net of problems posed for both the British colonizer and the Indian subject. Forster depicts these problems in the context of a country on the verge of revolution, massing its forces and energies to throw out the oppressor. The vehicle for this story is the drama of several English and Indian characters whose lives interweave and who find their personal loyalties, their love and friendship for each other torn apart in the struggle for independence and national liberation.

The novel is rich in sense of time and place. If you've never been to India, when you finish **A Passage to India** you will be sure you have. Forster's rendering of this mysterious and alien country is so intense and vivid that we come away from it with the sense that we know as much about it as we do about Moscow in reading Dostoevsky's **Crime and Punishment** or **The Brothers Karamazov.** The novel begins with this exquisite description of place:

> Except for the Marabar Caves—and they are twenty miles off—the city of Chandrapore presents nothing extraordinary. Edged rather than washed by the river Ganges, it trails for a couple of miles along the bank, scarcely distinguishable from the rubbish it deposits so freely. There are no bathing-steps on the river front, as the Ganges happens not to be holy here; indeed there is no river front, and bazaars shut out the wide and shifting panorama of the stream. The streets are mean, the temples ineffective, and though a few fine houses exist they are hidden away in gardens or down alleys whose filth deters all but the invited guest. Chandrapore was never large or beautiful, but two hundred years ago it lay on the road between Upper India, then imperial, and the sea, and the fine houses date from that period. The zest for decoration

stopped in the eighteenth century, nor was it ever democratic. There is no painting and scarcely any carving in the bazaars. The very wood seems made of mud, the inhabitants of mud moving. So abased, so monotonous is everything that meets the eye, that when the Ganges comes down it might be expected to wash the excrescence back into the soil. Houses do fall, people are drowned and left rotting, but the general outline of the town persists, swelling here, shrinking there, like some low but indestructible form of life. (p. 7)

So much sense of decay and timelessness, such profound limitations to human activity and behavior – the tone is set for the clash between East and West, between the generally easy-going and soft (by English standards) Indians and the aggressive and energetic English men and women who rule the country.

Your students should find this 322-page novel fascinating. For additional information about Forster and **A Passage to India**, you might wish to consult the following works:

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A FAREWELL TO ARMS

One of the great books of the modern period is surely Ernest Hemingway's **A Farewell to Arms**. Published in 1929, the book was an immediate success; more than 100,000 copies were sold in the first year. Critics tend to think of it as Hemingway's best novel and one of the works that earned him the Nobel Prize in literature in 1954. In a sense the book is just as popular today as it was in 1929; it still sells tens of thousands of copies each year, and is studied in hundreds of college English courses.

Part of the reason for the book's popularity is the fact that it is one of the most beautiful and poignant love stories ever written. Incredible as it seems, in the midst of the first World War, at that time the most destructive conflict in human history, when ten million people were dying for what seemed like a hopeless and stupid cause, two lonely people find each other and in their love try to create a meaningful life for themselves. Frederic Henry and Catherine Barkley are the Tristan and Isolde, Romeo and Juliet, Gawain and Guinevere, and Paris and Helen of modern times. Their short-lived triumph over adversity, their ultimate tragedy, only reflects the great frustration most people feel in achieving and maintaining a lasting love relationship.

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SONS AND LOVERS

My favorite D. H. Lawrence novels are **Lady Chatterly's Lover** and **Sons and Lovers**. Because I'm fairly certain you would not be allowed to teach **Lady Chatterly**, I'm recommending his early autobiographical novel, **Sons and Lovers** (1913), one of the most beautiful love stories in modern literature, though not nearly as explicit as **Lady Chatterly. Sons and Lovers** is the story of Paul Morel, brought up in a small mining town in England in a nearly impoverished, but prideful, family. Paul hates his rough and alcoholic father; idolizes his mother. When his older brother dies, Paul becomes the mother's favorite and her hope for transcending the degradation of her life. These expectations weigh heavily on Paul, who finds himself in the ambivalent position of wanting to make a life for himself and having to be the sole comfort and psychological support for his domineering mother. The conflict nearly destorys him, but with the help of both his early sweetheart and mistress, he frees himself from that domination. As the novel ends, we are left with the belief that Paul will be able to make a life for himself and survive the death of his mother.

Most interesting in this story is the intricate detail by which Lawrence gives us a full portrait of this amazing family—not only the conflict between Paul and his father, but the two parents as well. Furthermore, the love Paul experiences is beautifully rendered. So too is the mining country setting; by the end of the story we feel as if we were intimately acquainted with it. This background helps us understand the economic condition of the miners and the condition of the

English working class. Such knowledge easily generalizes to an understanding of working and living conditions of miners in other countries, including our own. You might think of the book as an adjunct to the social studies curriculum, also to the study of the family, and to a course on sex development and maturity.

For further information about Lawrence and **Sons and Lovers**, I recommend the following:

Daleski, Herman M. **The Forked Flame: A Study of D. H. Lawrence**. Evanston, Ill.: Northwestern University Press, 1965.

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THE ROCKING HORSE WINNER

D. H. Lawrence's "The Rocking Horse Winner" concludes with a startling and frightening recognition, which I doubt I can explain or rationalize. The short story, about 19 pages, is about a young boy who develops an uncanny ability to pick racing horse winners and who makes a fortune but dies in the effort. The boy comes from a middle-ciass family that is always in debt and used to a much higher standard of living. The mother considers herself and her husband **unlucky**, and quite openly expresses her bitterness for having been so unlucky as to have married a luckless husband. Moreover, she and her children know that she is incapable of love, though everyone else thinks of her as an excellent mother. Her son, Paul, determines that he will save the family, and we see that he is trying to do for his mother what his father is incapable of, and in the process to win her love. The depth of his own need for her love is represented through his perverse passion for his rocking horse. Too old to be riding it, he nevertheless rides the toy horse in a blind fury, urging it on in what Lawrence describes as an inward search for luck:

> Absorbed, taking no heed of other people, he went about with a sort of stealth, seeking inwardly for luck. He wanted luck, he wanted it, he wanted it. When the two girls were playing dolls in the nursery, he would sit on his big rockinghorse, charging madly into space, with a frenzy that made the little girls peer at him uneasily. Wildly the horse careened, the waving dark hair of the boy tossed, his eyes had a strange glare in them. The little girls dared not speak to him.

And he becomes quite lucky, winning a fortune for his family, for his mother. But the more he wins, the more greedy his mother becomes, and the harder he must ride to find luck. The harder he tries, the more difficult it is. Finally the effort kills him. Lawrence's point is that the boy dies as a result of the failure of his enormous exertion to win him his mother's love. He cannot live without it; she has none to give.

Although this brief account hardly does justice to the richness and intricacy of the story, it may provide enough information to determine whether you want to use such a story. As a piece of writing, it is superb: Lawrence uses the language sparingly; the story is a model of control and understatement. Nothing is explained and everything must be inferred from the story itself. It is open to many interpretative approaches, of which the above is only one. Perhaps a good way of exploring the meaning of the story is to have your students search their own experience for similar or related experiences, which, if they are reluctant to discuss openly, they could write about either as fiction, drama, poetry, or plain autobiographical essay. If you have access to and are yourself involved in the use of media—videotape, film, or audiotape—you could suggest any one of these media as appropriate means of exploring the relevance of "The Rocking Horse Winner" to your students' lives. What relevance has it to yours? You ought to ask yourself that question if you choose to use the story. It must mean somthing special to you or don't use it.

THE STRANGER

One of the short classic pieces of fiction of the modern period is Albert Camus' **The Stranger (L'Etranger)**, published in French in 1942 and translated for English publication in 1946. Probably no book has come to represent more fully than this the modern existentialist movement. In fact among people who do not know much about existentialism, Albert Camus and **The Stranger** are synonymous with it. The book was published during the second World War at a time when France was under German occupation and when extreme violence had become everyday facts of life. If World War I had disillusioned a whole generation, World War II numbed one. There had been no precedent that could have prepared people for the shock at the discovery of the attempt to systematically

annihilate the Jewish people and millions of others. During this period, so-called civilized peoples returned to that basic primitive, animal world that Conrad had described in "The Heart of Darkness." No atrocity of head hunders and cannibals could compare to the bestiality of modern civilized man. Freud had been more perceptive than he knew when he warned against the dangers to an overly repressed civilization in which the destructive forces of the Id might finally break out and wreak havoc on the world.

Camus saw this phenomenon of violence and brutalization as an intensification of the normal condition of absurd being. Despite Freud's **Civilization and Its Discontents** and **Beyond the Pleasure Principle**, no effort of the rational mind could account for such a state of affairs. And perhaps no psyche could cope with it. In **The Mythe of Sisyphus** (1942), he describes what happens to a person who tries:

> . . . in a universe suddenly divested of illusions and lights, man feels alien, a stranger. His exile is without remedy since he is deprived of the memory of a lost home or the hope of a promised land. This divorce between man and his life, the actor and his setting, is properly the feeling of absurdity. (p. 6)

The sense of **absurd** being or **being** absurd produces a profound alienation of the person from himself and life around him. Reason functions without feeling, the rational processes are separated from the emotions. Such is the condition of Camus' protagonist in **The Stranger**. Meursault, a French Algerian, already a stranger in a strange land, can **feel** nothing. How dramatic that separation of mind and feeling is we can see in the astonishing first paragraph of the novel:

> Mother died today. Or, maybe, yesterday; I can't be sure. The telegram from the Home says: YOUR MOTHER PASSED AWAY. FUNERAL TOMORROW. DEEP SYMPATHY. Which leaves the matter doubtful; it could have been yesterday.
>
> (p. 1)

Not only does he have no feeling about the death of his mother, but even his reason is incapable of dealing with objective fact. **Nothing is certain.** And so the novel goes until Meursault kills an Algerian in self-defense, then finds himself charged with murder. His very inability to feel emotion for his mother's death is used as evidence against him and he is condemned to death as an unfeeling, unregenerate societal menace.

In prison awaiting the outcome of his appeal but with the near certainty that it will be denied, he tries to fortify himself against hope which, frustrated, could hurt him:

> Nothing, nothing had the least importance, I knew quite well why . . . What difference could they make to me, the deaths of others, or a mother's love, or his (the Priest's) God; or the way a man decides to live, the fate he thinks he chooses, since one and the same fate was bound to "choose" not only me but thousands of millions of privileged people who, like him, called themselves my brothers.

Finally, he succeeds in achieving the release from concern for his life that gives him a sense of transcendence and ultimate freedom. The novel ends with Meursault's vision of his freedom in a poetic conclusion that even in translation vibrates with startling affirmation:

> Then, just on the edge of daybreak, I heard a steamer's siren. People were starting on a voyage to a world which had ceased to concern me forever. Almost for the first time in many months I thought of my mother. And now, it seemed to me, I understood why at her life's end she had taken on a "fiance"; why she's played at making a fresh start. There, too, in that Home where lives were flickering out, the dusk came as a mournful solace. With death so near, Mother must have felt like someone on the brink of freedom, ready to start life all over again. No one, no one in the world had any right to weep for her.
>
> And I, too, felt ready to start life all over again. It was as if that great rush of anger had washed me clean, emptied me of hope, and, gazing up at the dark sky spangeld with its signs and stars, for the first time, the first, I laid my heart open to the benign indifference of the universe. To feel it so like myself, indeed, so brotherly, made me realize that I'd been happy, and that I was happy still. For all to be accomplished, for me to feel less lonely, all that remained to hope was that the day of my execution there should be a huge crowd of spectators and that they should greet me with howls of execration.

Such an ending might be compared with Bigger Thomas' recognition at the end of Richard Wright's **Native Son**, or of the protagonist in Ralph Ellison's **Invisible Man**, or of Kurtz or Marlow in Joseph Conrad's "The Heart of Darkness." The pessimism needs to be confronted, not avoided, so that its sources might be understood and corrected, as Camus does later in his novel **The Plague**, where, despite the cruelty of life and the imminence of death, people are capable of helping others and achieving pride and satisfaction in doing so.

For additional information about Camus and **The Stranger** you will find the following critical works useful:

Bree, Germaine. **Camus** (includes bibliography). New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1959.

Cruickshank, John. **Albert Camus**. London: Oxford University Press, 1959; New York: Galaxy Books, 1960.

Hanna, Thomas. **The Thought and Art of Albert Camus**. Chicago: Henry Regnery Co., 1958.

Maquet, Albert. **Albert Camus: The Invincible Summer.** Translated by Herma Brissault. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1958.

Thody, Philip. **Albert Camus: A Study of His Work**. London: Hamish Hamilton Ltd., 1957. Distributed by Macmillan Co., New York.

OTHER RECOMMENDED WORKS OF FICTION:

James Joyce. **Dubliners**. Original publication 1916. New York: Viking Press, 1965, paper, 214 pages.

This collection of 15 short stories had an enormous influence on the composition of short stories and today represents some of the finest crafted stories in our language, certainly models which your students could imitate and learn from. The 15 stories are about different Dublin characters, all of whom Joyce knew and who are thinly disguised. Taken together we have what amounts to a portrait gallery of Dubliners and Dublin at the turn of the century. More importantly, in so far as Joyce successfully rendered the individual lives of these people we have a sense of the universality of their problems, much in the way we experience Edgar Lee Masters' **Spoon River Anthology** and Sherwood Anderson's **Winesburg, Ohio**—the latter most certainly influenced by Joyce's work.

The collection is organized to represent different levels of maturity, from childhood to middle age, and the relationship of the growth and development of the Dubliners to the overwhelmingly negative influence of their Dublin environment.

Sherwood Anderson. **Winesburg, Ohio**. Originally published in 1919. New York: Viking Press.

Winesburg, Ohio does for small Midwestern towns at the turn of this century what **Dubliners** did for Dublin. It made towns such as Claxton and Elyria, Ohio, and their people immortal. Such towns and people are part of the living museum of literature. The 19 stories of the lives of individuals in the mythical town of Winesburg (though the people themselves are derived from Anderson's personal experience) are held together by the presence of the young journalist, George Willard, in all of them, either as narrator or narrator/participant, an obvious foil for Anderson himself. The organization of the stories reflects the growth and maturing process of this young man and thus parallels **Dubliners** in yet another way. Though in **Dubliners** there is no unifying consciousness other than that of the ambience of Dublin itself, the organization of the work to reflect the growth process helps create a sense of the growth and development of the consciousness of the omniscient narrator, or of Joyce himself.

Each of the stories is a minor classic of modern prose style, and taken as a whole, **Winesburg** has become a classic piece of early twentieth-century American writing.

Andre Malraux. **Man's Fate**. originally published in 1934. New York: Random House, 1961, paper, 360 pages, translated by Haakon M. Chevalier from the French.

This remarkable novel tells the story of the social upheaval in China in 1927 in which we can see the same civil forces at war which culminated in 1949 in the defeat of Chiang Kai-Shek by Mao Tse Tung and the Communist party. The novel is told with a dramatic immediacy that is almost more appropriate to the stage then to the novel form. But in so doing Malraux has written a tense and exciting, if frightening, account of an anguished period of modern history. If your students like action-filled spy-adventure stories steeped in social significance, this novel will certainly interest them.

William Faulkner. **Intruder in the Dust** (1948). New York: Modern Library, 1964.

Of all the superb works by Faulkner, I am recommending this one. Although considered one of Faulkner's minor works and seriously marred by its heavy reliance on preaching, the novel represents a substantial attempt by one of the most important of our white American writers to create a believable black character who is also a noble human being. Such a character is Lucas Beauchamp, a poor older black man, unjustly accused of murder and about to be lynched. He represents such a powerful image of pride and courage to a young white southerner, that the boy decides the man must be innocent and at great risk to himself attempts to help prove it. The story is about this boy and his difficulty in fully accepting the black man as a human being because of the conditioning he has already received from white society.

I don't want to recommend any other Faulkner fiction because in all the best earlier work he depicts black people as less than human, or as inferior to whites. We need to do a tremendous job of reeducating our young people to the limitations of racial and other stereotypes before we recommend reading to them which reinforces or does not challenge them.

Franz Kafka. **The Metamorphosis** (Although not published in his lifetime, the short story was written in 1912). New York: Bantam Books, 1972, 58 pages of story text, followed by nearly 150 pages of notes and critical essays, translated and edited by Stanley Crongold.

Kafka is one of the most unusual writers the world has ever known. He died at the age of 41, an obscure person who asked that his unpublished manuscripts be burned, but whose intentions were thwarted by his good friend and literary executor, Max Brod. Through his agency Kafka's work was published and by the 1930's Kafka's name was synonomous with the sense of nightmare and horror afflicting modern people. "Kafkaesque" is the word we use to describe that condition. The famous and fascinating short story, "The Metamorphosis," tells of a young man who awakens one day to find that he has become a "monstrous vermin," a cockroach or beetle. Why and how this transformation takes place we never really know. In fact why we believe it at all is a deep-seated mystery. In the course of the development of the story, the young man's family must deal with the horror as best they can, and finally resorts to killing the monstrosity. What does the story mean? That is difficult to say. But that it touches some deep level of our unconscious is evident in the uneasy feelings we have that somehow the story makes sense, though we are at a loss to explain it.

Perhaps we come closest to understanding the story when we refer to someone as "that insect," or when we think of ourselves as no better than an insect. In **King Lear**, Gloucester says: "As flies to wanton boys, are we to the gods. They kill us for their sport." And in T. S. Eliot's "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock," Prufrock remarks: "I should have been a pair of ragged claws/Scuttling across the floors of silent seas." Such feelings are undoubtedly behind Gregor's transformation.

Sholom Aleichem. **The Adventures of Mottel the Cantor's Son** (the book was completed in 1916). New York: Collier Books, 1952, paper, 224 pages, translated by Tamara Kahana from the Yiddish.

Sholom Aleichem is best known for the musical play, **Fiddler on the Roof**, and the remarkable star of that show, Tevyeh, the dairyman. **The Adventures of Mottel** is the story of the emigration of young Mottel and his family to America from a town in Eastern Europe. Mottel reminds us of Huck Finn in his hilarious series of misadventures that touch pathos and are never far from tragedy. Not only do we get an insight into what it must have been like to be a poor immigrant in the early years of this century, but we get the special flavor of Jewish immigration and life in New York City. I recommend the book for an introduction to one of the most important of our minority cultural experiences.

Jean Toomer. **Cane**. originally published in 1923. New York: Harper and Row, 1969, paper, 239 pages.

Another very important expression of minority perspective on life in America is Jean Toomer's **Cane**. Written by a black writer and his only published work, **Cane** is a beautiful, poetic rendering of the life of black people in the South, and then becomes a tortured examination of the problems blacks have experienced in leaving the South for the industrial and urban North. **Cane** is a series of separate vignettes, interweaving poems and fiction, in the best modern technique—Toomer is more poet than prose writer. I can't resist quoting the opening paragraph of the first vignette, "Karintha":

> Her skin is like dusk on the eastern horizon, O cant you see it, O cant you see it, Her skin is like dusk on the eastern horizon . . . When the sun goes down.

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PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS*

American Theatre Association
1317 F Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20004

The Secondary School Theatre Association and Children's Theatre/Creative Drama Association are affiliates of this national theatre organization which holds an annual convention and publishes materials of itnerest to K-12 teachers.

Central States Speech Association
Dr. David M. Berg, Executive Secretary
University of Kansas
Lawrence, Kansas

Illinois Association of Teachers of English
Mr. Wilmer Lamar, Executive Secretary
100 English Building
Urbana, Illinois 61801

Illinois Speech and Theatre Association
Central Office, MacMurray College
Jacksonville, Illinois 62650

The ISTA publishes a newsletter and journal, holds an annual convention with meetings of interest to teachers, K-12, and sponsors workshops.

Illinois Theatre Association
P. O. Box 2480
Station A
Champaign, Illinois 61820

This organization has an annual convention, activities such as the Illinois High School Theatre Festival.

National Council of Teachers of English
1111 Kenyon Road
Urbana, Illinois 61801

The ERIC Clearinghouse on Reading and Communication Skills is at the same address.

Oral Interpretation Workshop

This is a statewide organization of twelve universities and colleges which meets each Spring at a different campus each year. Membership is limited to college-level faculty and students, but visitors are always welcome. For information, contact Charlotte Waisman, Northeastern Illinois University, Chicago, Illinois 60625.

Speech Communication Association
5205 Leesburg Pike
Falls Church, Virginia 22401

The SCA has two publications of interest to K-12 teachers: **Communication Education**, a journal for speech educators; and **Talk-Back**, a newsletter for teachers. **Communication Education**, formerly called **The Speech Teacher** is available in college and university libraries, or one may subscribe by joining the SCA.

The ERIC/SCA Speech Communication Clearinghouse at the SCA address has listings of many materials and bibliographies.

*Each organization conducts an annual convention.

WORKSHOPS AND FESTIVALS

Colleges and universities in Illinois hold summer workshops and offer short courses for teachers. Contact the Speech Communication Department, English Department, Theatre Department, Communications Department, or in some cases, Departments of Education at each campus for further information or contact the Illinois Office of Education for a composite listing.

Illinois High School Theatre Festival

This annual event is cosponsored by the Illinois Office of Education and Illinois Theatre Association. It provides workshops in curricula and production techniques for students and teachers, full-length student productions, short experimental student productions, and special events.

Wisconsin Oral Interpretation Festival

Outside of Illinois there is a Wisconsin Oral Interpretation Festival held in the early Fall. Write William E. McDonnell at University of Wisconsin at Eau Claire.

Young Authors Conference

Each year, the Illinois Language Experience Special Interest Council and the Illinois Office of Education sponsor a young authors conference. Contact the Illinois Office of Education for information.